

# THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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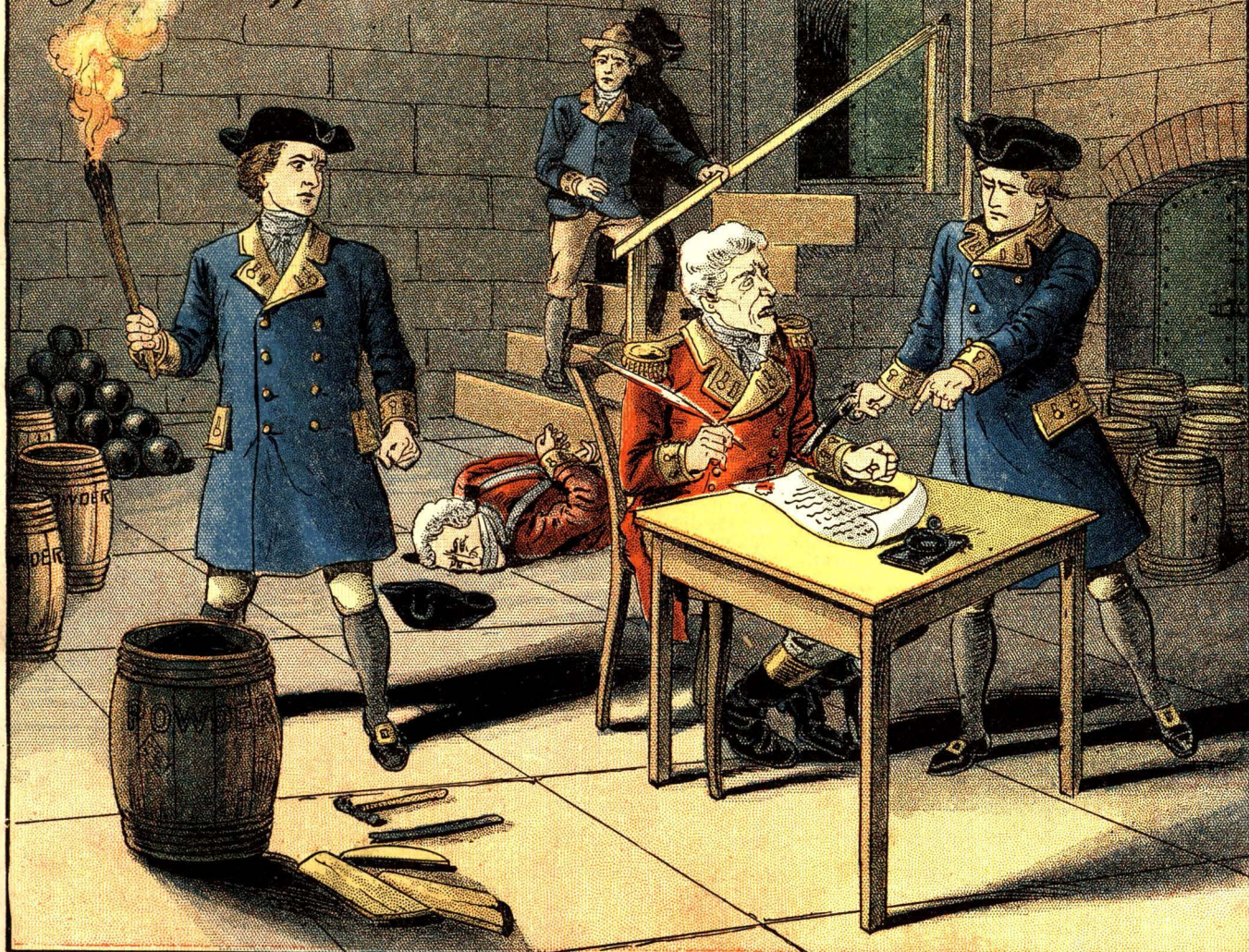
No. 96.

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 31, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.

## THE LIBERTY BOYS' DARING; —COR— NOT AFRAID OF ANYTHING.

By HARRY MOORE.



"Sign the paper!" cried Dick in firm, ringing tones; "sign, or we will tie you up like your companion and set off the barrel of powder and blow you to fragments!"



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## CHAPTER I.

### A BRAVE YOUTH.

"Tell me where your father keeps his gold."

"I cannot tell you, sir."

"You mean that you won't tell."

"I mean that I cannot, for I do not know."

"Bosh."

"You don't believe me?"

"I do not."

"I am speaking the truth, nevertheless."

"You can't make me believe you. Your father has gold hidden somewhere about this place, and we want it."

"If my father has any gold I do not know it."

"Boy, you are lying."

It was the first week in May, of the year 1778. In front of an old inn which stood at a crossroads, about halfway between Germantown and Philadelphia, stood a youth of perhaps eighteen years. In front of him stood a British officer wearing the uniform of a lieutenant, and behind him stood three common soldiers. It was this officer and the youth who were engaged in conversation, as above given.

When the officer told the youth he lied, the young fellow's face flushed with anger, and he made a motion as if to strike his insulter a blow, but the officer's hand dropped on the hilt of his sword, and showing his teeth in a snarling smile, he said:

"Go slow, my boy! Go slow, and take it easy. If you were to attempt to strike me I would run you through without ceremony, and with as little compunction as though you were a chicken."

"You would not dare," the youth exclaimed, undauntedly.

"Bah! You don't know what you are talking about."

"I think I do."

"You may think so, but you are mistaken. I want to know where your father's hidden wealth is, and I am going

to find out, even if I have to hang you up to a tree in order to wring the secret from you."

"I tell you I don't know anything about it."

"And I say you lie, you young rebel dog."

The youth's face flushed, and his hands clenched and unclenched in a manner which showed he would have liked to have given the insulting redcoat a blow. But, of course, he did not dare do so.

"You are mistaken," the youth forced himself to say, calmly. "My father has no money, so far as I know. I heard him say just the other day that we would likely starve if the British remained much longer in Philadelphia."

"Oh, he said that, did he?"

"Yes."

"Why would that make you likely to starve?"

"Why, the British come along once or twice a week, and enter the inn and make him get up a big dinner for them, and they ride off without ever seeming to think of paying, and there is no money in that, is there?"

"Well, not much, true; but I have been informed that your father is rich—that he was rich before the British came to Philadelphia, and that being the case, he must have gold secreted somewhere about the inn. You know where, and you had better tell."

"I don't think he has any gold secreted about here, or anywhere else, sir, and if so, I certainly do not know it."

"That will do for you to tell; but it won't do for me to believe. I will give you just one minute in which to make up your mind to tell the truth."

The lieutenant took out his watch and held it in his hand, watching the hand move, so as to know when the minute was up.

"You need not give me the minute, for I do not know anything about the matter in question, so cannot tell you,

The officer's voice was grim and fierce, and it seemed likely that he meant what he said.

The youth said no more, but waited, a look of quiet courage on his face.



Presently the officer slipped his watch back in his pocket. "Time is up," he said grimly. "Now, where is your father's money hidden?"

"I have already told you that I don't know."

"You still stick to that story?"

"I have to do so. I don't know, so what else can I do?"

"Bosh. I don't believe you, and I think that a little neck-stretching will be good for you. Jim," to one of his men, "go out to the stable and get a rope."

"All right, lieutenant," and the soldier hastened away.

As he moved away, a beautiful maiden of perhaps sixteen years came running out upon the piazza, and pausing in front of the officer, she clasped her hands, and said, beseechingly:

"Please, sir, do not hurt my brother."

"Oh, no, what a little beauty you are, to be sure, miss," the lieutenant cried, gazing admiringly and almost impudently at the girl. "So you don't want us to hang your brother, eh?"

"You should have stayed in the house, Mary," said her brother, in a tone of mild displeasure.

"No, no. Please do not hurt him, sir."

"I'm glad she didn't," said the officer. "I'm glad I have got to see you, miss. You are just about the prettiest, sweetest specimen of American girlhood that I've seen since I came to this country, and I'll tell you what I'll do. If you will give me a kiss or two I will promise that I won't hang your brother."

"You impudent scoundrel," cried the youth, his anger getting the better of his discretion.

"Oh, Tom, be careful," breathed the girl.

"You do well to warn your brother to be careful, Miss Mary," said the lieutenant, his face red with anger. "But for you I would run the insolent young scoundrel through."

"You are just about big enough coward to do it," said the youth, whose blood was up.

"Brother, brother," pleaded the girl, "please don't speak in such a manner to the gentleman."

"He's no gentleman, Mary, or he would never have made such a proposition," said the youth, promptly.

"Oh, come now, where is there any insult in that proposition?" the lieutenant exclaimed, his eyes on the beautiful face of the girl, a bold look of admiration shining forth from them.

"It certainly is an insult, nevertheless," said the youth. "My sister is not in the habit of giving kisses to every one who comes along, nor would she give a kiss for pay."

"Well, she would do it to save your life, wouldn't she?"

"I would not permit it."

"Oh, you are brave, aren't you," in a sneering

"Well, I would at least die honorably, and with the assurance that I could respect myself—which I could not if my sister were to save me in such a manner."

"You will do well to accept my proposition," said the officer with a grim smile, "for if you don't I will hang you, and you will take all the kisses that I want afterward, and the girl will be unable to help herself."

"You are just what I said you were," said the

"You are a coward and a scoundrel."

"You still think that, do you?" in a threatening voice

"Yes."

"All right. I will soon fix you so you won't be in a condition to think anything. Here is Jim, with the rope. It won't take long to settle you for good and all."

"Oh, sir, please spare my brother," cried the girl.

"On the conditions already given I will do so, and spare the others," was the reply.

"You need not spare me on any such conditions," said Tom Carroll, promptly.

The lieutenant muttered something which sounded like a curse, and turned and addressed the man with the

"Come up here on the piazza, Jim," he said; "rig a rope and a noose, and put it around this young fellow's neck. We'll hang him to that tree yonder."

The youth, Tom Carroll, seized upon the moment when the officer's head was turned to whisper in his sister's

"They won't dare hang me, Mary, so don't be afraid."

"First seize the young scoundrel and tie his hands behind his back," the lieutenant ordered, and the other soldiers hastened to obey his command.

Tom Carroll thought of making resistance, but second thought told him it would be useless.

"There are four of them, and they are armed," he said to himself, "and if I was to resist they would shoot me down, and my sister would have no one to look after her. No, I won't resist, and I am confident they will no more than make the attempt to frighten me into telling where father's money is hidden."

The redecoats quickly bound the youth's hands together behind his back, the noose was rigged and thrown over his neck, and then he was led down off the piazza and underneath the limb of the tree which stood near at hand.

The other end of the rope was thrown over the limb of the tree, and the end was seized hold of by the three common soldiers, and the rope was pulled taut.

Then the lieutenant faced the youth, and glared at him threateningly and triumphantly.

"What do you think now?" he asked.



"Just what I have thought all along."

"We are going to hang you."

Indeed?" The youth was cool and composed.

Not so the girl, however. She was trembling like a leaf in the wind, and her face was the color of ashes. She addressed, and facing the officer, said:

Please, sir, please do not hang my brother."

Accept my proposition, and I will not harm your brother."

"We refuse!" cried the youth, before his sister could speak. "Go ahead, and do your worst. I would scorn to live my life if it had to be purchased in such a manner."

The men pulled down on the rope, and drew the youth till only his toes were touching the ground. They held him there almost a minute, while the cruel pressure became almost buried in the flesh of the neck, and the youth's face grew redder and redder as the circulation was restricted. The girl stood there, her hands clasped, her eyes dilating, and fixed fearfully on her brother's face.

"Now ease down a bit," ordered the lieutenant, and the youth's feet were again on the ground, and his face gradually lost some of the red color as the blood got back into circulation again.

"Now will you tell me where your father's gold is hidden?" the officer asked.

The youth tried to speak, but could not, right away, and he shook his head.

"You won't, eh?" in an angry voice.

"No," half gasped the youth, his voice sounding weak and hoarse.

"You had better tell me."

"I don't know, I have already told you."

"But I am confident you do know." Then a thought struck the officer, and he turned to the girl.

"If you are not willing to save your brother's life by giving me the kisses," he said, "you can do so by telling me where your father's gold is concealed. Tell me at once, and I will free your brother."

The girl shook her head sadly.

"I would gladly tell you if I knew," she said, "but I do not know; and I am like my brother, I don't think father has any gold hidden about the place."

"I am confident that he has, and I believe that you know it, and that you know where it is concealed."

"No, no. If I knew I would tell you in an instant."

"Well, one or the other of you two will have to tell, or your brother will never live to see another sunrise."

Then the lieutenant, addressing his men, said:

"Give him another taste of the rope, men—and pull him clear off the ground this time."

The men obeyed, and they pulled down on the rope till the youth was lifted clear of the ground. Not even his toes were touching, and the youth began writhing and struggling, as if in the throes of strangulation.

The girl could not endure the sight of this, and she cried out in an eager, imploring voice:

"Oh, sir, let him down, quick. I will give you the kisses. I cannot stand here and see my brother hanged."

"That is sensible talk," said the lieutenant. "All right. I will spare your brother's life on those conditions. Let him down, men."

The men lowered the youth till his feet touched, and then the girl leaped forward, and pulled the rope till it was loosened so that her brother could get his breath, and she steadied him, for he was so dizzy he would have fallen. He was soon almost himself, however, and the lieutenant said:

"Now, miss, I will take those kisses, if you please."

There was triumph in his tones, and eager anticipation as well; but he was destined to meet with disappointment, for at this instant a cool, calm voice was heard say:

"I wouldn't take the kisses if I were you, lieutenant. They would not be given freely, and certainly you would not enjoy them under such circumstances. I am so sure you would not, indeed, that I shall forbid your taking them."

The lieutenant and his three men—and the youth and the maiden as well—looked around, and saw a handsome, bronzed youth sitting on a horse which stood within four yards of them. In the youth's hands were two cocked and leveled pistols, and in his keen, gray-blue eyes was a look which said "Shoot!" almost as plain as words could have said it.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE REDCOATS FOILED.

"W—who are you?" gasped the lieutenant.

"Who am I?"

"Yes."

"One who will not stand idly by and see a gang of scoundrels mistreat innocent people."

"Oh, you are, eh?" half-sneered the officer, his assurance returning to him in a measure.



"I am."

"What do you mean by coming in upon us, here, and interfering?"

"I mean to see that you don't injure this young man or insult the young lady."

"Oh, you're a sort of knight-errant, then?"

"To that extent, yes."

"Well, don't you think you are taking too much upon yourself?"

"No, I don't think so."

"You will before you get through with us." There was a threat in the tone.

"You think so, do you?"

The youth was cool and imperturbable.

"Yes."

"Young man, you had better leave here at once," said the lieutenant in as savage a tone as he could command.

"I had better leave here?" elevating his eyebrows.

"Yes."

"But I have no intention of doing so, my friend."

"If you do not you will lose your life."

"I have no fears of any such thing happening."

"You should have. Don't you see there are four of us?"

"Yes, I see that."

"And you have dared to interfere in our affairs."

"Yes, so I have."

"Well, that is enough. We are not men to brook such interference."

"I am aware that you are not—that is, not if you can help yourselves."

"And you think we can't help ourselves?"

"In this case, yes."

"Bah. You might wound one of us by accident, but the others would surely kill you. You had better go away."

"I could not think of it."

The lieutenant and his men were nonplussed. They did not know what to do.

There was something in the air of the stranger youth that impressed them in spite of themselves.

He did not look like a common, ordinary young man, by any means. There was a look in his eyes which told them that he was a dangerous fellow.

"You had better think this matter over very carefully, young man," said the lieutenant. "You are evidently green and inexperienced, and have no conception of the danger you are in."

The strange youth smiled in an amused manner.

"Oh, that's what you think, eh?" he remarked.

"Yes, it is a self-evident fact. But for this we would have killed you long ere this."

The young man laughed aloud at this.

"You are something of a humorist, my friend," he said. "Don't think you can make me believe any such wild statements as that, for I know better."

The officer saw he could not awe or frighten the youth and although disappointed, he was curious to know what the youth was.

"He is some one who has had experience," he said of himself. "No novice would dare appear here and show such a bold front to four of us. I wish I knew who and what the fellow is." He decided to ask.

"Who are you, young fellow?" he asked.

"You wish to know who I am?"

"Yes."

"Why do you wish to know?"

"So that we may know the name of the most impudent young scoundrel we have ever encountered since coming to America."

The youth laughed.

"So that's why you wish to know, is it?"

"Yes."

"Very well. I think I shall accommodate you."

"You will tell us who you are?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Who are you?"

"Have you ever heard of 'The Liberty Boys of '76'?"

The lieutenant and his three men started and gave utterance to exclamations of amazement, not unmixed with consternation, and they stared at the youth with wide-open eyes.

"Yes, I've heard of the 'Liberty Boys,'" was the reply.

"I supposed you had. Well, I am their commander."

"Surely you are not——"

"I am Dick Slater, at your service."

Exclamations escaped the lips of all the hearers.

"Dick Slater."

"The rebel scout and spy."

"The captain of 'The Liberty Boys'!"

"So that's who you are!"

It was indeed Dick Slater, the noted patriot scout, spy and captain of "The Liberty Boys of '76." In reply to the exclamations of the redcoats, he nodded and said:

"Yes, I am Dick Slater, the patriot scout and spy—and now, what are you going to do about it?"

The redcoats looked at one another questioningly and dubiously.

They did not know what they were going to do about it.



They realized, now, that they were in great danger. This handsome, smiling-faced youth was not to be trifled with. They knew him to be a dead shot, and it was also well known that he was afraid of nothing.

Still, they would have liked to have been able to make prisoner of the youth.

They knew there was a reward offered for his capture, and they would have liked it, could they have taken him to Philadelphia a prisoner, and captured the reward.

The lieutenant wondered if they might not manage to do so if they worked the matter rightly.

He turned several schemes over in his mind, but none of them seemed to offer much hope of success. Dick Slater was not one who could be taken with ease.

"Well," said the lieutenant, presently, "I don't see that we can do anything."

The youth nodded his head in approval.

"Now you are talking sense," he said. "You certainly can do nothing, and the quicker you get away from here the better it will be for you."

The lieutenant looked at Tom and Mary Carroll, hesitated, looked at Dick again, and then turned to his men.

"I guess we might as well go, boys," he said. "This fellow Slater is a dead shot, and would kill two of us, at least, if we tried to fight him. We will go, and await a better opportunity for getting at him."

"Still talking sense," said Dick calmly. "You are doing well, lieutenant. I am beginning to think you are not such a fool as you look."

A curse escaped the lips of the young officer.

"I will get even with you, sooner or later, Dick Slater. Never you fear," he grated. "It is your turn now, but next time it may be mine, and then—look out."

"I make it a rule to always be on the lookout, lieutenant," was the calm reply.

"You will need to be on the lookout from this time forth, was the reply in a fierce tone. "I owe you something for this afternoon's work, and I always pay my debts."

"Oh, you need not trouble yourself, my friend," was the calm reply. "I don't consider that you owe me anything."

"Bah! Come, boys."

He started to walk away, hesitated, and then turned again toward Tom Carroll and his sister Mary.

"I will see you two again," he said in a menacing voice. Don't think that this ends the affair, by any means."

"Next time I will try and be ready for you," replied Tom, from whose neck the noose had been removed by his sister. "You took me by surprise, this time."

"Bosh. Come along, boys."

The lieutenant strode away, followed by his three men, and mounting their horses, which were tied nearby, they rode away in the direction of Philadelphia.

Dick Slater leaped to the ground, having returned his pistols to his belt, and cut the rope binding Tom Carroll's arms.

"Well, they had you in rather a tight place," said Dick, smiling.

"You are right," was the reply; "and but for you, Dick Slater, I think they would have ended my days."

"I have no doubt regarding the matter, for they are heartless scoundrels."

"So they are. Well, I thank you for saving my life, sir."

"That is all right. No thanks are needed, for I am very glad to render assistance to any friends of the great cause; and I take great pleasure in spoiling any schemes of the redcoats."

"You certainly spoiled this one," smiled Tom, shaking Dick's hand heartily.

"Yes, they were somewhat disappointed, weren't they?"

"Indeed they were."

"My name is Tom Carroll," said Tom, "and this is my sister, Mary."

"I am glad to know you, Mr. Slater," said the girl, impulsively, giving the youth her hand. "I was almost frightened to death for fear the redcoats would kill brother, and I cannot tell you how much I thank you for what you have done for us."

"Then don't try," smiled Dick. "As I told your brother, I am glad that I was able to render assistance to friends of the cause of Liberty. As a true patriot, it gives me great pleasure to have been instrumental in doing so, and in spoiling the plans of the British."

At this moment a man rode up and leaped to the ground. He was a handsome man, of middle age, and Mary exclaimed: "Oh, father, I'm so glad you got home safely."

"Why, what's the trouble, Mary?" the man asked. "Why should I not have got home safely?"

"Some redcoats were here, and they would have killed Tom but for this young man, who interfered and forced them to go away," explained the girl. "Did you not meet them?"

"No, I met no one," replied Mr. Carroll, for this was who the man was.

"Then they have entered the timber, just down the road a little ways," said Dick. "And that means danger for you folks, I think."







"For the reason that after our men went to Philadelphia might be found that the plans formed were utterly impracticable, for reasons which could not be foreseen."

"Then what is your idea regarding the way to go about making the attempt to rescue our men?"

The youth thought a few moments, and then said:

"I'll tell you what I think, your excellency. My idea is at the party that goes to attempt to make a rescue should simply enter Philadelphia, without having any already formulated plans, and then settle down and keep watch of affairs, and be governed by circumstances."

The commander-in-chief nodded his head.

"I believe you are right, Dick," he said.

"It will be a very difficult matter to effect the rescue of our men from right in the heart of the British army, your excellency," went on Dick. "And it will take time and the exercise of great care, combined with some luck and the taking advantage of favoring circumstances."

"Yes, that is undoubtedly true; and in order to take advantage of favoring circumstances it will be necessary to, as you say, be on hand, and on the watch."

"Yes, your excellency."

There was a brief period of silence, during which time both were thinking, and then General Washington said:

"Dick, you are more familiar with Philadelphia—or rather with the location of the British troops, and everything of that kind, than anyone else, and I have thought you would be the best person to make the attempt at rescuing our men. Would you like to be given the task?"

"I should ask for nothing better, sir," was the prompt and eager reply. "I had made up my mind to ask you to let me do the work."

"Very well, Dick. Your wish shall be gratified. I place the matter in your hands, and shall let you do it in your own way."

"Thank you, sir."

"I suppose you will take some of your 'Liberty Boys' to aid you in the work, Dick?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"And when will you start for Philadelphia?"

"This very night."

"Good! The quicker you get there the better, of course."

"Yes, sir. And now, how many of our men were captured?"

"Forty, Dick?"

"Very well. I will go and get my men selected, and we will start for Philadelphia as soon as possible."

"How many of your men will you take, Dick?"

"I hardly know, sir. I shall not take very many, how-

ever, for if I were to do so we would be noticed and suspected. What is done will have to be accomplished by strategy more than by force."

"True. Well, I leave all in your hands—leave everything to your judgment."

"Thank you, your excellency; I will do my best to merit the confidence you repose in me."

"I am sure of that, Dick."

After some further conversation Dick left headquarters, and hastened back to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys."

He thought the matter over as he went. He had intended to take only a few of the "Liberty Boys," but on second thought he decided to take his entire company. He knew the youths were all shrewd and trustworthy, and had no doubt of their ability to enter the city of Philadelphia unbeknown to the British; and once there, they would be able to avoid attracting attention by dividing up into small parties of three and four.

The youths knew Dick had been to headquarters, and they suspected there was something of interest on the tapis.

"What is it, Dick?" asked Bob Estabrook, the youth's right-hand man.

"Yes, what did the commander-in-chief want, Dick?" from Mark Morrison.

"Tell us, old man," from Sam Sanderson.

"I suppose you boys know that forty of our men were captured to-day by the redcoats?" remarked Dick, answering by asking a question, Yankee fashion.

"Yes."

"You are right."

"We know it."

"It was a shame."

"I wish we could rescue them."

Such were a few of the exclamations.

"Well, that is just what the commander-in-chief wishes us to try to do, boys," said Dick quietly.

"Is that so, Dick?" cried Bob, excitedly. "Does he want us to try to rescue our men who were captured?"

"Yes."

"Hurrah!"

"Say, I'm glad of that."

"So am I."

"We can do the work if anybody can, Dick."

"You're right about that."

The "Liberty Boys" were eager and enthusiastic, and Dick saw that they were only too glad of a chance to make the attempt to rescue their comrades.

"Have you taken into consideration, boys, the fact that



in order to make the attempt to rescue our friends, we will have to venture right into the heart of the British encampment?"

"Yes, yes, we've thought of that," replied Bob. "But we don't care for that. That makes it all the more exciting and interesting."

"That's right," agreed Mark Morrison.

"It will be a daring thing to do—to venture into Philadelphia on such an errand, boys," said Dick soberly.

"Oh, yes," replied Bob, carelessly; "but what of it? We are not afraid of anything, and the danger simply adds to the zest and interest of the affair."

"That's right," cried several in chorus.

Dick smiled.

"I knew that was the way you would look at the matter," he said.

"Are we all to go with you, Dick?" asked Sam Sander-son.

"Yes."

"Hurrah!"

"And when are we going, Dick?" asked Mark Morrison.

"Just as soon as we can get ready."

"Good! We are glad to hear that."

"Yes, yes," in chorus.

"What are your plans?" asked Bob.

"I'll tell you, Bob. We will ride in a party till we get to within a mile or two of Philadelphia, and then we will divide up into little parties of three and four, and ride into the city from three or four different directions."

"That's a good plan."

"Yes, it is the only way, Bob. We would not dare try to enter in a body."

"No, of course not."

"And after we have succeeded in getting into the city, we will go to various taverns and engage rooms. Then we will settle down and be on the alert for a chance to rescue our comrades."

"How will we know what to do, Dick, if we are not together?"

"I will be down at the river front, at an old empty warehouse which stands there, every night from nine till eleven, and you boys will come there and report to me, and receive instructions."

"That is a good scheme."

"I think so. And now, boys, begin getting ready. We will start just as soon as possible, as we have quite a long ride before us."

The youths began busying themselves at once, and half an hour later all were ready to start. They lost no time,

but, mounting their horses, rode quietly out of the encampment, and away toward the east.

Some of the soldiers had not yet retired for the night, however, and many were the conjectures regarding the destination of the "Liberty Boys."

"I know where they are going," said one soldier.

"Where?" was the eager inquiry.

"To Philadelphia."

"To Philadelphia?"

"Yes."

"What are they going there for?"

"They are going to try to rescue our comrades who were captured to-day by the redcoats."

"Going into Philadelphia on such an expedition as that?"

"Yes."

"Well, they certainly are daring!"

"Daring is no name for it."

"Oh, those youngsters are not afraid of anything," said one of the soldiers.

"You are right about that; but I don't think they can possibly succeed in rescuing our comrades."

"You think not?"

"I'm sure of it. Why, they are bound on the worst kind of a wild-geese chase."

"Well, if it was any other set of fellows than the 'Liberty Boys' I should say the same," said another; "but with those chaps it is different. There is scarcely any limit to their achievements. They are likely to do almost anything."

"You are right; and it doesn't matter much how difficult the task may seem to be either," from another.

"No; I have known them to do things that seemed practically impossible of accomplishment, and it would not surprise me if they should succeed in rescuing our comrades."

"I don't think it possible," said another, with a shake of the head. "Why, they will have to penetrate into Philadelphia; right into the heart of the entire British army, and what chance will they have to do anything?"

"Well, if they don't see any chances, they will make some," grinned another. "That is a way the 'Liberty Boys' have."

"Yes, that's so, too."

"I hope they will succeed," said another.

"So do we all."

The soldiers discussed the matter for half an hour, and at last, having exhausted the subject, threw themselves down on their blankets and were soon asleep.



Meanwhile the "Liberty Boys" were riding eastward at rapid pace. They crossed the Schuylkill River, and rode onward till they reached Germantown. They rode through Germantown at a slow pace, and saw nothing of any redcoats, the town being apparently wrapped in slumber.

When they had passed through the town they turned more toward the south, and rode onward at a gallop for quite a while.

Suddenly an exclamation escaped the lips of Bob Estbrook.

"Look yonder," he cried, "there must be a house on fire. See the reflection in the sky?"

An exclamation escaped the lips of Dick Slater. "That is just about where the inn kept by Mr. Carroll is located," he said to himself. "Can it be possible that the redcoats have set fire to the building?"

He feared that such was the case, and he gave the order to ride faster.

"Let us hurry and get there, boys," he cried. "It may be that the redcoats have set fire to the old inn, and if so we may be able to save some lives by getting there quickly."

They were soon at the scene, and as they drew up in front of the old inn, it was seen that the building was blazing, and was in danger of being burned to the ground.

## CHAPTER IV.

### TO THE RESCUE.

In front of the old inn stood four British soldiers, and Dick thought he recognized them as being the fellows who had been on the point of hanging Tom Carroll that same afternoon.

The redcoats had heard the clatter of the hoofbeats, and when they saw the youths leaping to the ground they ran around the building and disappeared from sight.

"Let the scoundrels go," said Dick. "The thing to do now is to put out the fire."

As they reached the house the front door opened, and Tom and Mr. Carroll, closely followed by Mary, emerged.

"I was sure it was you, Dick," said Tom. "I'm glad you came."

"It would have been bad for you if we had not got here," said Dick. "And now, some buckets and water. We will put the fire out."

Tom quickly brought three or four buckets, and water

was drawn from the well, and the "Liberty Boys" went to work.

It was a hard fight, for the fire had gained considerable headway, but at last they got the better of the flames, and finally extinguished them altogether.

The inn was not greatly injured, the fire not having penetrated to the interior of the building as yet.

Mr. Carroll started to thank Dick, but he told the gentleman that there was no need for him to do so.

"We did only our duty, sir," the youth said. "You do not need to thank us."

"The fire was set by the same four scoundrels who tried to hang me this afternoon, Dick," said Tom.

"So I thought, Tom. I was sure that I recognized the fellows."

"Yes; they came here and tried to get us to open the door and let them in—they pretended they were travelers, wishing a night's lodging, you know, and when we refused to open the door, they set fire to the building."

"They are evil and desperate men," said Dick; "and you will have to be on your guard against them."

"So we will."

But Dick and his youths could not stop long. They had business of their own to attend to, and bidding the three patriots good-by, they mounted and rode onward in the direction of Philadelphia.

Mr. Carroll and Tom and Mary entered the inn and closed and barred the doors, and Tom got a musket and a couple of pistols, and said he was going to sit up and watch for the redcoats.

"If they come back I am going to treat them to a few doses of lead," he declared.

"I hardly think they will return to-night," said his father, but the youth shook his head.

"There's no knowing what they will do," he said. "I don't believe they are the kind that give up till they have been given some hard knocks, and if I lay eyes on them to-night I am going to give them a knock or two that they won't forget in a hurry."

Mr. Carroll and Mary went to their rooms upstairs, and blowing out the light Tom remained downstairs in darkness.

He moved slowly from one room to another, pausing and looking out of each window that he came to, and he kept this up for an hour at least, without having caught sight of anyone.

A few minutes later, however, he thought he saw some dark shadows moving toward the house from the timber not far from the rear of the building.



He watched closely, and was soon certain that the figures were moving. They were coming toward the inn, too, for they grew gradually plainer to be seen.

"It's the redcoats, all right enough," thought Tom. "They are coming back to finish up their work. Well, I'll see if I can't give them a surprise."

He carefully raised the window a few inches, and poked the muzzle of the musket through the opening.

Cocking the weapon, Tom waited till the shadows were within perhaps twenty yards of the house. Then he took careful aim at the figure on the right, and pulled trigger.

Crack! went the musket, and with a wild yell of pain and terror one of the four dropped to the ground, and began kicking and thrashing around at a great rate.

Yells of rage and curses escaped the lips of the other three men, and Tom called out loudly:

"That's what all of you will get if you don't stay away from here. We do not intend that you shall do us any damage, and you shall not, even if we have to kill the last one of you to prevent it."

Then he closed the window and fastened it, and stepped back, out of range of bullets, for he suspected that the three would fire.

They did so, breaking the window, but Tom did not mind that very much so long as he had escaped.

"Oh, you can stay out there and fire at the house all you want to," he cried. "You can't hurt us, and I think that before long I shall be able to bring down every one of you."

Evidently the redcoats feared so, for they lifted their wounded comrade, and hastened away, disappearing amid the trees.

"Did you hit one of them, Tom?" asked Mr. Carroll, who had hastened to come downstairs.

"Yes, father; I brought one of the scoundrels down."

"I'm glad of it."

"And so am I. And if they come back again I'll try my hardest to bring another down."

"Do you think you killed him, Tom?"

"Not outright; at least. But he must be severely wounded, for he dropped, and gave utterance to the most terrible groans."

"Was he able to walk when they moved away from the house?"

"No, his comrades had to carry him."

"Oh, well, then I don't think they will bother us again, to-night."

"I hardly think so."

"Will you remain up and keep watch?"

"Yes; they might come back, and I want to be ready to welcome them if they should do so."

"Very well. I guess I will go back to bed."

He did so, while Tom made the rounds of the rooms the ground floor, keeping a close watch for the redcoats.

\* \* \* \* \*

The "Liberty Boys" rode onward, steadily, and at last were within two miles of the city.

Then Dick called a halt.

"We had better scatter out now," he said; "and we will approach the city from half a dozen different directions and in parties of three and four. You know what you are to do when you get into the city?"

"I think we do, Dick," replied Mark Morrison.

"You are to go to taverns and engage rooms, for we must have to stay in the city a week or more."

"Yes."

"Then, each evening at nine o'clock you are to come to that old, empty warehouse down on the river-front—you will have no trouble in finding it—and I will meet you there, and give you your instructions."

"All right."

"You understand, then, all of you?"

"Yes," in chorus.

"Then scatter—and be careful not to get nabbed as you are entering the city."

"We'll be careful."

The company of "Liberty Boys" quickly divided into more than a score of small parties of three and four, and when all had gone save Dick, Mark Morrison, Ben Estabrook, and Sam Sanderson, the four continued onward.

"We will go straight on in," said Dick.

They rode onward, and presently came to the outskirts of the city.

When they had gone a few blocks farther they were halted by a sentinel.

"Halt! Who comes there?" he called out.

"Friends," replied Dick.

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign," said the sentinel.

The four youths rode forward, without saying a word until they were almost upon the sentinel, who held his musket with the bayonet extended threateningly toward them, and cried out:

"Stop! Don't come any farther, until you give the countersign."

The youths brought their horses to a stop.

"We don't know the countersign," said Dick.



"Ha! Say you so? Then you are——"

"Friends, as I have said," broke in Dick calmly.

"But if you don't know the countersign, you cannot——"

"Oh, yes we can be, and we are friends, even though we don't know the countersign."

"How does that happen?" the sentinel wanted to know.

"It is very simple."

"Explain, then."

"I will do so. You see, it is this way. We are loyalists, who live up country a ways, beyond Germantown, and we have come down to see if we may be allowed to join the British army."

"Oh, that's it, eh?"

"Yes."

"How do I know you are speaking the truth?"

"You will just have to take our word for it, I suppose."

"Yes, but that isn't a very good way to do."

"Why not?"

"You might be rebels."

Dick laughed in an amused manner.

"We might be, true," he said. "But even supposing we were, what would it matter? There are only four of us. Surely you are not afraid that we would be able to bring about the overthrow of the entire British army?"

"Oh, no, I'm not afraid of anything of that kind."

"Then let us pass."

The sentinel hesitated.

It was evident that he hardly knew what to do.

At last he lowered his musket and stepped to one side.

"All right. Go along," he said.

"Thank you," said Dick. "I give you my promise that we won't thrash the entire British army."

The sentinel laughed. But it was rather a forced laugh.

"If you fellows are rebels you will get into trouble in the city," he said.

"Oh, there is little doubt regarding that," replied Dick.

"If we were rebels we would be fools to venture into the city, don't you think?"

"Yes, I think so."

"That's right," and the youths rode onward.

They continued onward till they were well down in the heart of the city.

Finally they paused in front of a tavern, told the hostler to take charge of their horses, and entering, asked the man behind the bar if they could get a couple of rooms.

He said they could, and the youths were shown to their rooms.

Dick and Bob had one room, while Mark and Sam occupied the other.

"I wonder if the rest of the boys have gotten safely into the city?" remarked Dick.

"Likely, Dick," was the reply.

They talked for a few minutes, being in no hurry to go to bed, and suddenly they heard an uproar downstairs.

The noise sounded in the direction of the bar-room and office, and consisted of yells and curses, and the sound of scuffling.

"What's going on down there, anyway?" asked Bob.

"Sounds like a free fight was in progress," replied Dick.

"Let's go down, Dick."

"What for?"

"It might be that some of our fellows are in the fight."

Dick started.

"That is possible," he said. "Some of the boys might have come to this same tavern, and gotten into a fight with some of those fellows down in the bar-room. There were a number of rather hard-looking customers, weren't there?"

"Yes; come along, Dick."

Bob was eager, and had the door open in a jiffy.

They stepped out in the hall, and as they did so Mark and Sam emerged from their room, which was just across the hall.

The same idea had occurred to them that had occurred to Dick and Bob, and the four youths hastened along the hall, to the stairs, and down these. Then Dick opened the door leading into the combined bar-room and office and leaped into the room, his three comrades following suit.

A glance was all that was needed to show them that they had been right in their suspicions. Four of the "Liberty Boys" were engaged in a hand-to-hand combat with eight or nine rough-looking fellows, two of whom were redcoats.

The "Liberty Boys" had taken up their position in one corner of the room, and were holding their opponents at bay, although outnumbered more than two to one.

The landlord was jumping up and down behind his bar, shouting for the combatants to cease fighting, but his words had as much effect as water has on a duck's back, and no more. The combatants paid not the slightest attention to him.

"Here, here! What is going on here?" cried Dick. "Is this your idea of fair play—nine or ten of you on four? Stop it at once or we will take a hand."

The rough-looking fellows paid no attention to Dick's words, and he gave a command to his three comrades, and they leaped forward, and began attacking the scoundrel-



All four of the youths were expert with their fists, and they went at the enemy with vim and energy, and the result was speedily seen. The rough-looking men began going down right and left.

## CHAPTER V.

### A LIVELY COMBAT.

"Take that."

Biff!

"And that!"

Biff!

"And that."

"How do you like that?"

Biff!

"And that?"

Biff—smack!

The remarks and the blows were uttered and given by Dick and his three comrades, and with every blow a rough went down, kerthump.

The other four "Liberty Boys," although somewhat winded by the exertion they had been forced to put forth before their comrades put in an appearance, gathered themselves together and went at the enemy with renewed energy, and the result was that the roughs were soon all knocked down in a pile on the floor.

"Now throw them out of the tavern!" cried Dick. "A couple of us will stand here and knock them down as fast as they try to get up, while the others carry them to the door and throw them out in the street."

Things were lively there for a few minutes. The roughs kicked, struggled, cursed, howled, and threatened, but all to no avail. The "Liberty Boys" paid no attention, but went ahead with the good work, and soon the bar-room was relieved of their presence.

"There, landlord, they are out," said Dick, calmly, and with a great show of politeness. "Such fellows ought not to be allowed to enter a respectable place like this."

"Oh, they will come back in and kick my place to pieces," the man said in terror. "They are dangerous men. They are desperadoes."

"Oh, no, they won't," said Dick calmly.

"Yes, they will. Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?"

"I'll tell you what you shall do," said Dick.

"What?"

"Let myself and friends have charge of the place for a little while. I will promise you then that if these scoundrels come back they will not do any damage to speak of."

"They will come back armed, and will shoot you if you attempt to prevent them from doing as they please."

"We can do a bit in the shooting line as well as they," said Dick, lifting the skirts of his coat and displaying the pistols in his belt.

"But the police will come if there is any shooting, and we will all be taken to jail."

"Surely they won't arrest you from protecting your property."

"Maybe not, but they will arrest you."

"Not if you tell them that you hired us to protect you."

"Maybe not."

"Certainly not. You tell the police that you hired us to protect you and your property; that we are in your employ and they will not arrest us."

"Very well. I will do that."

"Good. And now, if those roughs return we will give them a reception such as they are not looking for."

Then Dick turned to his comrades.

"Be ready, boys," he said, "and if those scoundrels come back shoot them full of holes if they try to use weapons against us."

"That's what we'll do," said Bob, promptly.

The landlord evidently did not feel very much at ease. He remained behind his bar, and fidgeted about, started at every sound, and seemed to be looking for the coming of the enemy with every passing moment.

Indeed, not many minutes elapsed before the door opened and one of the roughs entered. He held a pistol in his hand, and it was evident from the savage look on his face that he would not hesitate to use it, but before he could do so Dick had drawn a pistol and covered the fellow.

"Don't attempt to level your pistol, my friend," the youth said calmly, but yet threateningly, "if you do——"

"Well, what will happen?" snarled the rough, glaring at Dick fiercely.

"Why, I will put a bullet through you, that's what will happen," was the quiet reply.

"And if one isn't enough, I'll make it two," said Bob with a grin.

The fellow stared at Dick, and then at Bob, with rather a keen, questioning expression in his eyes. It was as if he was trying to make out whether or not the cool youths would really do what they threatened.

"You wouldn't dare fire," he said.

The youths laughed aloud.



"My dear sir, you don't know who you are talking to," said Dick. "If you think we won't fire, you just try to bring your pistol to a level, and see how quickly I will put a bullet into you."

"The chances are that you would not hit me," the rough growled, "and if you missed me I would kill you."

Again the youths laughed, and this seemed to astonish the fellow. But Dick's words astonished him still more. They were:

"But I wouldn't miss you, sir. I never missed a man in my life, even at twice the distance you are from me."

"Blazes!" the fellow said to himself, "he talks as if he had been in pistol-fights before, and he looks like he had."

He's mighty cool and calm. I wish the other fellows would hurry and come." Aloud he said:

"You talk mighty big, but just wait till the rest of my crowd gets in here, and then there will be fun."

"You're right, there'll be fun—too much fun for you and your gang," said Dick, quietly, "and if you will take my friend's advice you will go out and tell your friends to stay out of here."

"I won't do anything of the kind."

"If you have their welfare at heart you will do so."

"You think so?" sneeringly.

"I am sure of it."

"Bah! You can't frighten me."

"I am not trying. I am simply telling you facts, for your own good."

"Oh, that's it, eh?"

"Yes; my friends and myself have no desire to kill you fellows, but if you come in here and attack us we will defend ourselves, and as we are each and every one dead shots with pistols, the result cannot be otherwise than that a number of your gang will be killed."

The youth spoke in such a calm, matter-of-fact manner that the rough was staggered. He looked at the youth archly, and finally seemed to conclude that Dick was simply trying to frighten him, for he said:

"We'll risk it."

"Very well," said Dick. "But, remember, I warned you."

"Oh, I'll remember that; and I thank you very much for your kindness." There was a sneer in his tone and, however, which showed that he spoke sarcastically.

Just then steps were heard outside the door. There was a shuffling as would indicate that a number of men were coming hurriedly, and to his comrades Dick said:

"Out with your pistols, boys, and when I give the word let the scoundrels have it."

Like a flash the eight youths drew twice that many pistols, and each and every one stood there with two pistols leveled. It was done so quickly and with such dexterity as to amaze the one rough within the room, and he blinked in surprise.

"We are dead shots, every one of us," said Dick quietly, "and we could kill at every shot if we wished to do so, but we do not, and so will simply shoot to give more or less severe wounds."

The next moment at least a dozen rough-looking men came trailing into the bar-room, but paused and stared in surprise when they saw the sixteen pistol-muzzles staring them in the face.

"Hello, what does this mean?" growled one, who seemed to be the leader.

He wore a British uniform, and there were two more besides himself who wore the British red.

"It means that you are going to get yourselves into trouble if you try to create any more disturbances in here," replied Dick, calmly.

"You won't dare use those pistols," the redcoat growled.

"We won't use them unless you fellows try to use weapons, and then you may be sure we will use them," was the calm, decided reply.

"But see here, I am a British soldier, and if you dare fire upon me you will be hung as a traitor to the king," the fellow cried.

"Bah! you can't fool me with any such talk as that," said Dick. "This is an affair that has nothing to do with the war. It is a private matter, and if you choose to mix up in it, you must be ready to take your medicine along with your comrades who do not happen to wear uniforms."

"All the same if you dare fire at me, or at either of my soldier comrades, we will see to it that you are taken prisoners and thrown into jail; and then the chances will be good that you will be shot or hung."

"My dear sir, you do not understand," said Dick; "if you fellows precipitate a combat, by attempting to draw weapons, we will open fire upon you, and we will take care to finish you three who have the uniform on. Then we will not be in any danger of being made prisoners by the British."

"I believe you fellows are rebels, anyway," the redcoat said, growlingly.

"Of course, you are at liberty to believe anything you like," said Dick calmly, "but you will understand that that does not make it so."

"Humph," grunted the redcoat, and then he beckoned



the other two redcoats to his side, and they whispered together for a few moments.

The youths held their pistols leveled, and kept a sharp watch over all the members of the gang, for they thought it possible that this was simply a dodge to cause delay, and make it possible for the scoundrels to catch them unawares.

The truth of the matter, however, was that the three redcoats did not like the looks of things, and were figuring on withdrawing. They had had more experience than the roughs had, and were enabled to detect the fact that the calm, cool-looking youths were dangerous fellows.

"Those chaps have been in many a fight before this," said the spokesman to his comrades, "and I more than half believe he meant it when he said they would finish us for good. I think we had better draw out of this affair. What do you fellows think?"

The other two were of the same opinion, and so the spokesman, after they had whispered for a few moments, said aloud:

"We have decided to withdraw from this affair for the present."

"That is sensible of you," said Dick. "And now, if you will persuade your friends to do the same thing you will be doing them a kindness."

"They can do as they please," growled the redcoat, and then he and his two comrades turned and left the bar-room.

"The rest of you will do well to follow their example," said Dick quietly. "I am saying this for your own good, not for ours, for we are in no danger whatever."

The men looked at one another questioningly, and somewhat uneasily. It was plain that few if any of them had much stomach for a combat with men who had the advantage that the youths possessed in having their pistols out and leveled.

Dick saw this, and he went on:

"You saw how it was with your redcoat allies. They did not care to risk an encounter with us. They are men of experience, and know something about fighting. If they would not risk it you should not be willing to do so, for fighting is their trade."

"Well, I guess you are right," said one of the roughs, in a growling voice. "We'll jes' foller their example an' get out uv here."

"That is the best thing you can do, I assure you," said Dick, approvingly. "We have no desire to kill, or even wound you, and will be glad to be saved the trouble of having to do so."

The men said no more, but one after another left the

bar-room, and soon only the landlord and the "Liberty Boys" remained.

The landlord drew a long breath of relief.

"I'm glad it's over, and nobody dead or wounded," said.

"So am I," agreed Dick. "We could have thrashed them easily enough, but it would have raised a big row, and would have caused us and you a great deal of trouble."

"Yes, it would, for a fact."

They talked a few minutes, and then the eight youths went upstairs—Dick and Bob, and Mark and Sam to rooms that had been assigned to them, and the other four youths being given a couple of rooms near by.

The youths went to bed, and were not disturbed during the night, managing to get a good night's rest.

They had a little talk in the hall next morning, and then went downstairs to breakfast.

The landlord greeted them pleasantly, and they were given a good breakfast, to which they did full justice, they were young and possessed good appetites, and, moreover, their camp-life had made good meals few and far between.

After breakfast they left the tavern in pairs, and scattered, some going one way, some another.

They put in the day in wandering about the city, keeping their eyes open for everything that came under their observation, and they encountered a number of the "Liberty Boys," and gave them sly winks of recognition, but not by looks or words did they show that either recognized the other.

That night, at nine o'clock, the youths began gathering in the old, empty storage-house down on the river-front.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE TORY SPY.

Dick was there, and as the youths came in in little parties of three and four, they came and reported to him, and received instructions as to their course for the coming night and day.

So far very little had been accomplished.

The house in which General Howe had his headquarters had been located, and the jail in which the patriot prisoners were imprisoned, but nothing further had been accomplished.

It had not been expected that they could accomplish



anything right offhand, however, and Dick and his comrades were not disappointed or discouraged.

When all had reported to Dick and received their instructions the meeting broke up and the "Liberty Boys" left the old warehouse, going in parties of three and four, as they had come.

They supposed they had been so careful as to not attract attention, but they had been seen, nevertheless.

A Tory citizen who lived down near the water front had caught sight of one of the parties of youth, and had followed cautiously, and had seen it disappear within the old warehouse.

"Now, whut does that mean, I wonder?" he said to himself. "Who air them fellers, an' whut air they up to, ennyway?"

He made up his mind that he would find out, and was approaching the warehouse cautiously with the intention of spying, when he caught sight of another party of four youths approaching, and he hastened to conceal himself until the four had passed.

When he saw this party disappear within the old warehouse, he was more excited and mystified than ever, and his curiosity was greatly augmented.

He again started, and crept forward, slowly and cautiously, only to be startled by the approach of still another party of youths. There were three in this party, and the Tory halted, and hastily concealing himself, waited, to see where the party would go.

He did not have long to wait. It approached the old warehouse and disappeared within.

"Jes' whut I 'xpected," the Tory muttered. "Now, I wonder whut's goin' on, ennyway? Thet makes erbout er duzzen thev gone in theer, an' et mus' be thet some mischief is on foot. I guess I hed better try ter fin' out whut et is."

Again he stole forward, but before he had quite reached the warehouse another party of four approached, passed him, and entered the warehouse.

This made the Tory still more excited, and he crept forward, eager to see what was going on.

He peered into the warehouse, but it was so dark within that it was all he could do to make out the location of the youths who had entered. Away toward the center of the warehouse, however, he saw a dark mass, and realized that this must be the youths in question.

"Now, ef I c'u'd only get clust enuff ter hear whut they air torkin' erbout," he said to himself; "but I'm afeerd they mought hear er see me, an' then I guess they'd make purty warm fur me."

He hesitated, but was eager to hear, and finally his curiosity got the better of his fears, and he entered the warehouse, and began making his way along the wall. It was so dark that he felt reasonably safe. He did not think that so small an object as one man could be seen. It was all he could do to make out the large body of youths.

The Tory did not get close enough to hear anything that was said—in fact, Dick and the youths held their conversations in whispers—but he saw something which made him open his mouth wide in surprise. He saw the crowd being constantly augmented by the coming of more parties of three and four, until it had grown to large proportions, and he was forced to retire quite a ways to avoid being discovered.

"Theer mus' be er hunderd uv 'em," the Tory said to himself. "Now, I wonder whut is up, ennyway?"

This he was unable to learn, however, and all he could do was to remain silently in the background and watch. He saw the gathering break up, presently, and the members dispersed, going as they had come, in parties of three and four.

The Tory held his place till all had gone, and then he followed, slowly and cautiously. He did not wish to run the risk of being discovered. Something told him that he would fare badly, if it were discovered that he had played the part of a spy.

The Tory was puzzled. He did not know what to do.

He thought the matter over for quite a while, and then, having been unable to come to any decision, he went home and told his wife what he had seen.

She was smarter than her husband.

"W'y, I'll bet et is er ban' uv rebels," she said, positively.

"Ye think so, Liz?" the Tory asked.

"Uv course I do; w'y else would they meet in sekret, heer in Philadelphia, whar everbuddy is redecoats er else loyalists?"

"Thet does seem ther way ter look at et, fur er fack."

"Uv course. They hain't loyalists, er they wouldn't be meetin' sekretly."

"I reckon yer right, Liz; they mus' be rebels."

"Yas, an' ther question is, Whut air they goin' ter try ter do?"

The Tory shook his head.

"Yer too much fur me, Liz," he said. "I dunno whut they're goin' ter do."

"Wal, one thing is sartin, an' thet is thet they're up ter mischief uv some kind."

"I reckon yer right erbout thet."

"Uv course I am."



"Wal, then, whut ort I ter do, Liz?"

The woman was silent for a few moments, and then she said:

"I'll tell ye whut I'd do ef I wuz you, Sam."

"Whut?"

"I'd go to headquarters an' tell Gin'ral Howe whut I hev seen."

The Tory slapped his thigh in delight.

"Thet's jes' whut I'll do, Liz," he cried. "Yer er trump, ole woman."

"Et may be ther makin' uv ye, Sam," the woman said, with an air of satisfaction. "Ef et is a party-uv rebels, an' they air captered ez er result uv ye tellin' erbout 'em, then mebby ther gin'ral'll do sumthin' fur ye. He mought make ye a orsifer in his army."

"So he mought. And then I'd be er big-wig, wouldn't I?"

"So ye would, Sam."

"Wal, I'll go straight ter headquarters an' tell ther gineral whut I hev diskivered, an' see whut he thinks erbout et."

"Thet's ther thing ter do. Ye better go right erlong."

"I will," and he left the house and walked rapidly toward the heart of the city.

Twenty minutes of rapid walking brought the Tory to the house occupied by General Howe and his staff of officers as headquarters.

The Tory ascended the steps and rang the bell.

The door was opened by a servant, and just behind the servant stood an orderly, who asked the visitor what he wanted.

"I wanter see Gin'ral Howe," was the reply, given with rather an important air.

"You wish to see General Howe?" in a surprised tone.

"Yas."

"What do you wish to see him about?"

"I'll tell 'im when I see 'im. I hev some important informashun fur 'im."

The orderly hesitated.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Sam Skaggs."

"Humph. You are a loyalist, I suppose?"

"I am, ye bet."

"Are you sure your information is of importance? Because, if it isn't, the general will be angry at me, and you also, if we bother him."

"Ye needn' be afeerd on thet score. Et's important enuff, ye may be shore."

The orderly hesitated a few moments, and then said:

"All right, come along, Mr. Skaggs. I'll risk it, and conduct you to the general's presence. "If you have information that is of importance, however, you will be sorry you came, and I will be sorry I showed you in."

"Ez I hev tole ye, ye needn' be afeerd on thet score."

The orderly led the way up a flight of stairs, along hall, and then knocked on a door.

"Come in," called out a voice.

The orderly opened the door, revealing a well-lighted room, with a table in the center, around which sat five men smoking, drinking, and playing cards. One of the quirkette was General Howe, and he looked inquiringly at the orderly.

"Here's a man who says he has important information for you, your excellency," the orderly said, in an apologetic voice.

"Ah!" exclaimed the general. "Show him in."

The orderly stepped aside, motioned for the Tory to enter, and as he did so said:

"Mr. Sam Skaggs, your excellency."

Then he stepped out of the room and closed the door.

General Howe bunched a handful of cards nonchalantly and then turned his gaze on the visitor.

"Well, Mr. Skaggs," he said, slowly and impressively "what important information is it that you have for me?"

Skaggs fidgeted and squirmed. He was very ill at ease. He was not used to the company of celebrities, and he felt much like a fish out of water.

"Wal, ye see, gin'ral," he stammered. "I—thet is—thort ez how't mebby—thet ef ye heerd what I hev ter tell thet mebby—thet et mought be thet ye'd——"

"Oh, come to the point," said General Howe, impatiently. "My time is valuable."

Which was true to the extent that in a stated length of time he would be able to win or lose a certain sum of money at cards.

"All right, gin'ral. I'll tell ye whut et is thet I hev ter tell. Ye see, I happened ter be down on ther river-front ter-night—I live clust by, ye know—an' I happened ter see er party uv four young fellers goin' erlong. I didn' think much erbout et ontel I saw 'em go inter ther ole warehouse whut stan's theer; an' I wouldn' hev thort so much erbout et even then, but right erway I seed another party uv three fellers go inter ther ole warehouse."

The general and his brother officers were listening with a look of interest on their faces now, and feeling that he was attracting favorable attention, Skaggs went on:

"I kinder wondered at thet, an' wuz thinkin' uv lookin' inter see whut wuz goin' on, when I saw another party u



our fellers go inter ther ole warehouse." The Tory paused a instant, drew a long breath, and continued: "I wuz excited and curious by this time, an' I sed ter myse'f ez how d see whut wuz goin' on, an' I started fur ther ole warehouse, but afore I got theer another party uv four fellers went in."

The Tory paused, and the general motioned to him to proceed.

"Go on," he said, impatiently and with some show of excitement. "What did you do?"

"Wal, I made up my min' thet theer wuz sumthin' queer goin' on, an' so I crept up clust ter ther ole warehouse, an' finally slipped inter et, an' made my way along ther wall, toward whur ther crowd uv fellers hed congregated. Ye e, I wanted ter try ter heer whut they wuz torkin' erout."

"Quite right. Go on. Did you hear?"

"No, I couldn' heer whut they torked erbout, fur they torked in whispers."

"Ha! They talked in whispers, did they?"

"Yas. I got ez clust ez I dared, but I couldn' heer nothin', an' hed ter be satersfied with whut I c'u'd see."

"Exactly."

"An' I seen enuff ter satersfy me, too, ye bet."

"Ah!" with an air of interest. "What else did you see?" Skaggs went on, then, and told how he had seen small parties of youths enter, one after another, until there were at least one hundred men in the old warehouse.

Exclamations of amazement escaped the lips of the British officers.

"This is rather a strange affair," said General Howe. "What do you make of it, gentlemen?" to his brother officers.

"Well," said one, with a reflective air. "It looks to me as if this man has stumbled upon a meeting of a band of rebels."

"That is what I think myself," said General Howe. "And to think of it. A gang of rebels, one hundred in number, to be here in the city, right in our midst, and holding secret meetings! It is almost unbelievable."

"But I seen et with my own two eyes, gin'ral," said Skaggs.

"Oh, I don't doubt your word, my man, and I will say at if we succeed in capturing the members of this band I will see to it that you are suitably rewarded for bringing the information."

"Thank ye, sir."

"That's all right. You were unable to hear anything these men said?"

"I couldn' heer, sir, becoss they torked in whispers."

"Very well. You may go."

General Howe summoned the orderly, who showed the Tory out, and then the commander-in-chief of the British army turned an inquiring face upon his brother officers.

"What shall we do about this matter, gentlemen?" he asked.

"I'll tell you what I think would be a good thing to do," replied one. "Let us organize a force of two or three hundred of our men, and station them in the vicinity of the old storehouse. Then if the rebels put in an appearance to-night, as I think it likely they will do, we can close in upon them and capture them."

"I judge that will be the best thing to do," agreed General Howe, after a few moments of thought.

The others thought the same, and so it was decided to put the plan into execution.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A NARROW ESCAPE.

The "Liberty Boys" were on the streets of Philadelphia till eleven o'clock at night, and then went to the taverns where they had rooms, and went to bed.

They were up early, next morning, and after breakfast went out and moved about the city the whole of the day, observing everything that was going on, in so far as they were able to do so.

Dick was as yet unable to formulate any plan for freeing the patriot prisoners. He knew where the jail was, and had been all around it, and had observed every angle and window, but had not seen anything that gave him much encouragement.

He did not believe it would be possible to effect an entrance by way of a window, without being discovered, and it would be equally impossible to break in the front door. He hardly knew what to do.

"All I can do is to meet the boys at the old warehouse, to-night, and hear what they have to say," he thought. "It may be possible that some one of them may have discovered something, or will have something to suggest."

About eight o'clock he, in company with Bob, Mark, and Sam, left the tavern and made their way in the direction of the river-front.

Twenty minutes' walk brought them to the old ware-



house, and they entered, and settled down to await the coming of the others.

They had no suspicion of the fact, but within three blocks of the warehouse, stretched around in a half-circle, were three hundred British soldiers. Redcoat spies had noted the appearance of Dick and his three comrades, and had sent word to the officer in command of the British force, and now they would wait till all the suspected rebels were in the warehouse, and then would close in and effect their capture.

One after another the little parties of three and four "Liberty Boys" put in an appearance, and entered the warehouse and reported to Dick, and just after the last party had appeared the youths were startled by seeing a dark object approaching them, and hearing a cautious voice say: "Hist! Keep still, ye fellers. I've got sumpin' ter say ter ye."

"Who are you?" asked Dick, stepping forward, and facing the intruder, who as the youth could see, was a boy of diminutive size—probably a wharf rat.

"Et don' matter who I be," was the prompt reply. "I'm er leetle chap whut hain't much ercount, but I knows sumthin' whut is might important ter ye fellers, and ther quicker I tells ye whut et is ther better et'll be fur ye."

Dick was impressed with the earnestness of the little chap, and so he said:

"Well, go ahead and tell us."

"I'll do et. Ther furst thing I am goin' ter tell ye is thet ye air almos' surrounded by redcoats, an' they know ye air in heer, an' air gittin' reddy ter close in onter ye an' capter ye."

"What!" exclaimed Dick. "Is that so, really?"

"Ye bet et is."

"How do you know this?"

"Et don' matter. I knows et, an' thet's enuff, an' ef ye air ter escape ye wanten be movin', an' mighty lively, too."

"How comes it that the redcoats are there?"

"They hev be'n informed thet ye fellers meet heer, an' they think ye air rebels, an' they air goin' ter try ter capter ye."

"Boy, if this turns out to be the truth, I shall owe you considerable of a debt of gratitude, and will wish to thank you. If we get away in safety, do you come to the White Oak Tavern to-morrow at twelve. I will be there."

"All right, sir. But ef ye air ter git erway, ye hed better be movin'."

"I doubt not that that is good advice, and we will act upon it."

Then Dick hastily told the "Liberty Boys" what the boy had told him, and said in conclusion:

"Now we must be getting away from here, and be ready to offer fight, for the chances are good that we will be attacked as we go."

"Ef ye pleeze, mister," said the boy, "ef ye'll foller me I think I kin lead ye erway frum heer, by er way thet'll keep ther redcoats frum seein' ye."

"Go ahead, my boy. We will follow."

"All right. Come erlong."

The boy led the way to the side of the warehouse from the river, and pushing some loose boards aside, led the party through an opening. The "Liberty Boys" followed unhesitatingly, and the entire party made its way along the side of the warehouse till the end was reached, and then the boy led the way across a short stretch of wharf and into an old lumber-yard.

This was threaded for quite a distance, and then they emerged upon a narrow, crooked street which led away from the river in a diagonal direction. After a rapid walk of ten minutes, the boy paused, and said to Dick:

"I think ye're safe now, but ye had better scatter out, fur ther redcoats'll be on ther lookout fur er big party, an' ye might be attacked a'mos' ennywhurs."

"All right, we will scatter out, my boy," said Dick. "And now, I wish to thank you for what you have done for us."

"Thet's all right, mister," was the reply. "I'm er patriot, I am, an' when I heerd Sam Skaggs torkin' ter his ole woman, an' tellin' uv her ez how he hed tole ther redcoat ginerall erbout ye fellers, an' how ye wuz ter be captered ter-night, I made up my min' thet I would do sumthin' fur ther cause uv Liberty, an' I went ter ther old warehouse an' warnen ye, ez ye know."

"And you may be sure that Dick Slater is not the fellow to forget what you have done for him, my boy," in a earnest voice.

"Say, air ye Dick Slater?" exclaimed the boy.

"I am."

"Then shake han's with me, mister. I've heerd uv ye long uv times, an' I've allers wanted ter see ye."

Dick shook hands with the boy, and then added: "And these are the 'Liberty Boys,' of whom you have heard."

"Say, I'm glad ter know thet," said the boy. "I am glad thet I wuz able ter save ye frum gittin' captered by ther redcoats."

"And so are we glad, my boy. And now, what is your name?"

"Sam Wells, mister."



"Very good, Sam. We are glad to know the name of the boy who rendered us such a favor."

"That's all right. I wuz glad ter do et, an' now thet I know who ye air, I'm more glad than ever."

Then the "Liberty Boys" bade the boy good-by, and chattering, they made their way from the spot, in parties of three and four. Soon they had all disappeared from sight, and the boy turned and made his way back in the direction of the old warehouse, whistling merrily.

\* \* \* \* \*

The British force waited till sure that all the suspected rebels were in the old warehouse, and then at an order from the commander, moved forward, and practically surrounded the building.

They were doomed to be disappointed, however. When the officer appeared at the opening in the end of the building and called out in a loud voice: "Come forth and surrender, rebels, on peril of death if you refuse!" there was no response, and after a little while investigation showed that there were no "rebels" in the building.

There was nobody in there, indeed; the building was empty.

The British hardly knew what to think. They had seen the parties moving toward the warehouse, and several of the spies said they had seen the parties disappear within the building, yet here it was empty; there was no one there. The British officer was greatly disappointed.

"Now, how did they manage to escape without being seen by us?" he cried. "And where have they gone?"

This was a question which no one could answer, of course, and there was no reply.

"Is there any place in or about the building where the rebels could be hidden?" he asked, and a lot of the soldiers began searching for a possible hiding-place.

They could find none, however, and presently gave up the search and reported to the officer that there was no possible place of concealment for so many men as had been in the warehouse.

Sam Skaggs was present, and he was perhaps the most astonished and worst disappointed man of all. He had seen several of the parties of youths approach and enter the warehouse, and now to find the building empty was a great surprise.

He was unable to explain the mystery of the disappearance of the "rebels," and the redcoats finally left the building and made their way back to their quarters down in the heart of the city.

The officer made his way to headquarters to report.

"Well?" remarked General Howe, eagerly, when the officer appeared before him. "Did you capture the rebels?"

The officer shook his head.

"I am sorry to have to report that we failed, your excellency," was the reply.

"You did not capture them?" Surprise and disappointment were in the tone.

"No, your excellency."

"How did that happen? Did you not have men enough?"

"Oh, I think we had plenty of men, so far as that is concerned."

"Then what was the reason you failed?"

"Did the rebels fail to put in an appearance?" asked another officer.

"No, they put in an appearance, all right."

"Then why did you fail?" asked General Howe, impatiently; "explain."

"I will do so. My spies saw the rebels enter the warehouse, your excellency, but when we closed in and surrounded the building there was no one in it."

"No one in it."

"Not a soul."

"Well, that is strange."

"Yes, your excellency. And the strangest thing about it is that we did not see them go, and have no idea how they managed to make their escape."

"That is rather a mysterious affair, I must say."

"They must have been warned by some one," said an officer, "and they slipped away before you closed in upon the building."

"I suppose that must have been the way of it," acquiesced the officer, "but I don't see how they managed to do it, for I had my men arranged in a half-circle, so as to cut off all chance of the rebels making their escape."

"Well, they did it, that is certain. How they did it is not of much importance."

This was from General Howe, and it was plain that he was very much disappointed.

The officers discussed the matter over wine and cigars for an hour, and at the end of the discussion were of course no nearer a solution of the mystery of the disappearance of the "rebels" than at first.

"Never mind. We will catch the rebels next time," said an officer who was possessed of a sanguine temperament.

"I fear we will never have such another fine chance," said General Howe. "They will be on their guard from now on. They know we are aware of their presence among us, and they will not give us another opportunity if they can possibly avoid doing so."



The others nodded their heads in assent to this. It was quite probable that, seeing as how the "rebels" had been smart enough to escape the trap set for them, they would be smart enough to avoid going into another.

Meanwhile, having reached their room in the White Oak Tavern, Dick and Bob were discussing the affair.

"How do you suppose the Tory, Sam Skaggs, knew we were patriots?" asked Bob.

"Probably he only guessed it, Bob," was the reply.

"Likely enough. He may have been smart enough to reason out that a party of men meeting secretly, in the heart of the British encampment, as it were, must be opposed to the British."

"I judge that was the way of it, and then he went to General Howe with the story, and that officer at once jumped to the conclusion that we were patriots."

"Yes, and then he laid the trap for us."

"And would have caught us in it but for the boy."

"You are right. We owe considerable to that little chap."

"So we do."

"What are we going to do, Dick? We will be in considerable danger from now on, don't you think?"

"Yes; but we will be careful and stick it out to the end. I am determined to rescue those prisoners."

"Well, I'm with you to the bitter end, Dick."

"I have not despaired of making a success, Bob; we will remain, keep our eyes open and our wits on the alert, and probably we will think of some way of accomplishing our purpose."

"I think so. I hope so."

"I am as confident as ever. We are gaining more and more knowledge of the city with each day we stay here, and when we do make the supreme effort to rescue our comrades we will know just where to go, and what to do to escape being captured."

"That's right."

"I have thought of a plan for doing what we are here to do, Bob," said Dick, after a short period of silence.

"You have?" eagerly.

"Yes."

"Tell me what it is."

The youth shook his head.

"Not to-night, Bob. We will wait, and see if we can find something else. My plan is a desperate one, and should be used only as a last resort."

"That's the kind of plans I like, Dick," with a grin.

"I'm for using it, anyway, last resort or no last resort."

"We'll wait a little, however, Bob," said Dick with a

smile. "It is even a more desperate plan than you have any idea of, I think."

"That's all the better. And it is all the more likely to succeed, I think," was Bob's reply.

Then the youths went to bed, and slept as soundly as though they had not escaped capture and possible death at the hands of the British by a very narrow margin.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A CLEVER SCHEME.

Dick did not go out upon the streets the next morning, but remained in his room, and, having secured quill, ink, and paper, busied himself writing.

He wrote several documents, and finally selecting one as being the most suitable for the purpose he had in view, he destroyed the others.

The other three "Liberty Boys" had gone forth, as usual, and they were back in time for dinner.

They reported that everything seemed to be as quiet as usual.

"Their failure to capture us last night does not seem to have caused much excitement," said Bob. "We did not hear anyone say a word about it."

"Likely only those who were engaged in the affair knew of it," said Dick.

They had just finished eating dinner when the boy, Sam Wells, put in an appearance. He was poorly dressed, and had a rather pinched, weazened face, but his eyes were bright and keen, and it was evident that he was nobody's fool.

The youths talked with the boy for awhile, and then Dick told him to come to the tavern again that evening.

"I will have something for you to do, then," he said.

"All right. I'll be heer," was the reply, and then the boy took his departure.

The youths went out upon the streets, then, and put in the afternoon looking around. They were on the alert, for they did not know but they might be pounced upon at any moment.

They were not molested, however, though the youths fancied more than one redcoat gave them rather searching looks, and when evening came, they returned to the tavern and ate supper.

Sam Wells appeared soon afterward, and Dick took the boy up to his room.



"Sam, I have some work for you," he said when they had entered and closed the door.

"All right. I'm red-dy ter do ennythin' ye wants me ter," is the prompt reply.

"Good. Do you know where the British headquarters are located?"

"Yes, I know; it's around on High Street."

"That's right. Well, I want you to go there."

"Whut am I ter do w'en I git theer?"

For answer Dick drew from his pocket the document he had written that morning and held it up to view.

"You see this?"

"The orderly will ask you what you want to see him for, and you must say that you have important business with him."

"I'll do et."

"No matter what the orderly says, stick to your statement, and insist on being shown to General Howe's presence."

The boy nodded.

"Ye kin trust me fur thet," he said. "I'll stick ter et, I make ther feller do whut ye say."

"Very well. And when you have done this, and have delivered the document into General Howe's hands, the chances are that you will be called upon to act as guide."

"Fur him?"

"Yes, and one other man, perhaps."

"An' whur'll I guide 'em ter?"

"I'll show you when we go down the street."

"All right."

"Now you are sure you understand what is required of you, my boy?"

"Yep."

"Very well. Put this document in your pocket, and don't lose it, whatever you do."

"I won't. I'll hand et ter Gin'ral Howe."

"Good. Now, come along, and I will show you where you are to bring the general and his companion to if they want you to guide them to the place mentioned in the letter which I have in your pocket."

The two left the room, went downstairs, and out upon the street, the three "Liberty Boys" following at a short distance.

Halfway down the block Dick paused in front of a vacant building. A glance up and down the street assured him that no one was watching, and he made his way to the rear of the building, the boy keeping close alongside him. At the rear of the building was a cellar-way, and lifting

the doors, the two made their way down the steps, and then, opening the door, entered the cellar.

"Here is the place you are to bring General Howe and his companion to, Sam," said Dick.

"This is ther place, is et?"

"Yes."

"D'ye think they'll be willin' ter come, Dick?"

"I think so; and if they ask you who lives here, tell them you don't know, except that he is a sick man."

"I unnerstan'."

"Say that he called you in, and got you to carry the message, and that is all you know about it."

"All right."

Then the two went back up the steps, and around to the sidewalk in front of the building.

"Go along, Sam," said Dick. "And I trust you to do the work well that I have given you to do."

"I'll do et well, ef sech er thing is possorable, Dick," was the reply.

"What is up, anyway, Dick?" asked Bob, the other three "Liberty Boys" having paused nearby.

"Come with me, and I will explain," said Dick.

He led the way around the house and down into the cellar.

Closing the door, he lighted a candle which he had brought with him, and by its light the three youths who were with him were enabled to see their surroundings, and they stared in wondering amazement.

There was the usual accumulation of old boxes and barrels that are to be found in cellars. But what attracted the attention of the three most was an open keg of gunpowder which stood in the middle of the cellar, and a rude writing-desk which stood nearby. In front of the desk was a stool, and on the desk were quills, ink, and paper.

The three looked around them in wonder.

"What does this mean, Dick?" asked Bob Estabrook.

"I'll tell you what it means, Bob. It means that I am going to try a desperate plan for effecting the rescue of the prisoners we came here to try to free."

"But what is the plan, Dick?"

"It is this: I am going to force him to sign an order for the release of the patriot prisoners. Armed with the order, it will be a simple matter to go to the jail, and have the prisoners set free."

"Yes, it will be a simple matter to have the prisoners set free—if we can get the order," said Bob. "But getting the order will be the difficulty."

"I am certain we can get it if General Howe comes here."



"That is the difficulty. I don't see how you can hope to get him to do so."

"I have used a very alluring bait."

"What?"

"I have written a note, stating that if he will come with the boy who hands him the note, he will learn where the one hundred rebels are located, and will be able to make them prisoners."

"That ought to be an alluring bait, sure enough," said Mark Morrison.

"So I think," said Dick.

"But even if he comes here he will not sign the order," said Bob.

"He will have to sign it, Bob."

"Will have to?"

"Yes. Do you see that keg of gunpowder?"

"Yes."

"Well, I will tell him that if he refuses to sign the order he will be left in the cellar, and the keg of powder will be set off, and he will be blown into a hundred pieces."

"That will be rather a persuasive argument, I think," said Bob, with a grin.

"I think so."

"And that's where the boy has gone—to General Howe's headquarters?"

"Yes."

"Jove, I hope the general will come."

"So do I. If he does I think we shall succeed in freeing our comrades. And in the expectation that we will succeed, I will send you, Sam, to get word around to the rest of the boys. Tell them to be in the vicinity of the jail where our comrades are confined as soon as possible, and be in readiness to get out of the city quickly."

"All right, Dick. But will you three be enough for this part of the work?"

"Yes."

"You expect the general to come alone?"

"He may have one companion, but we three fellows will be able to handle two British officers."

"And not more than half try," said Bob.

"All right. Then I'll go at once."

Sam hastened away, and then Dick began making arrangements to receive the expected visitors.

In one corner was a rude bunk, and Dick told Mark to lie down in the bunk.

"General Howe thinks he is to see a sick man, and you will play that part," said Dick. "Bob and I will remain near the door, and as soon as the officers enter we will leap upon them and overpower them."

Mark went to the corner and threw himself down in the bunk.

"You fellows want to be careful and not let the red-coats get the better of you," he said.

"Never you fear, Mark," said Bob. "We'll attend to them all right."

"I will take care of General Howe, Bob," said Dick. "You will take care of the other fellow—if he brings a companion, which he is likely to do, of course."

"How shall I handle him, Dick? Simply jump on him, and overpower him?"

"No. Knock him senseless with the butt of one of your pistols."

"All right. That will be simple and easy."

"I don't want to serve General Howe that way, of course, but will simply overpower him."

"Won't he cry out, and bring some one down here, Dick?"

"No. I'll choke him so he can't."

"Good. That's the way to do it."

Then the youths became quiet, and waited patiently for the coming of their intended victims.

## CHAPTER IX.

### "SIGN OR DIE!"

Sam Wells walked rapidly in the direction of the British headquarters.

It was a walk of only ten minutes, and the boy ran up the steps of the building and rang the bell.

The door was opened by a servant, and an orderly who stood just in back of the servant stepped forward and asked:

"What do you want, boy?"

"I want to see Gin'ral Howe," was the prompt reply.

"You wish to see the general?"

"Yep." The boy was unabashed.

"Why do you wish to see him?" The orderly's tone and air were supercilious in the extreme. He thought this street urchin could not have any business with the British commander-in-chief.

"I want to see 'im on bizness."

"Oh, you do, eh?"

"Yep."

"What is the business?"

The boy shook his head.



"I kaint tell ye," he said calmly.

"Do you mean to tell me that you have come here on business, and yet do not know what it is?"

"Oh, no. I know whut ther bizness is, all right."

"Then tell me what it is."

"I kaint do et, mister."

"Why not?"

"'Cos my bizness is with Gin'ral Howe, an' nobuddy else."

"Oh, come now, a boy like you can have no business with the commander-in-chief."

"But I hev, though."

"Tell me what it is that you want to say to the general, and I will carry the message to him."

The boy shook his head.

"No, ye won't do nothin' uv ther kin'," he said, decidedly. "I'm heer ter see ther gin'ral, an' I'm goin' ter see him."

The orderly stared in amazement. He was somewhat angered, too, by what he considered to be the insolence of the little fellow, and he made a gesture of impatience, and said:

"Go along away from here, or I will have you arrested for being insolent."

"I hain't goin' erway till arter I've seen Gin'ral Howe," was the prompt reply. "An' ye'd better show me ter whur he is, right erway. Ef ye don', ye'll be sorry, fur I hev important bizness with 'im."

The orderly was about to make an angry retort and order the boy to go away, when a voice from the landing above called down:

"Show the boy up, Sanders. How do you know he is not telling the truth?"

It was the voice of General Howe himself, and the orderly's manner underwent a quick and startling change.

"This way, my boy," he said. "Just follow me."

"All right," with a grin. "I tole ye ye hed better show me ter ther gin'ral. Ye'll beleeve me, nex' time, I reckon."

The orderly made no reply, but led the way upstairs, and to General Howe's room.

Having done his work, he hastened to get out of the room and close the door, for he feared he would be reprimanded still more.

General Howe was seated at his desk, and motioned to a chair. The boy took the seat without a word.

The British officer surveyed the little chap for a few moments keenly, and then said:

"You said you had important business with me. Now, what is the business?"

"I've brung ye sumthin," the boy replied, ~~fumbling~~ in the recesses of his ragged coat.

"What have you brought me?"

"This," and the boy held out the letter.

General Howe took the letter, opened it, and read the contents, which were as follows:

"Gin'ral Howe: Ef ye wanter know whur ther rebels air whut ye tried ter ketch las' night, come ter me, an' I will tell ye. I know whur they air, an' kin tell ye so ye kin ketch them. I am in bed, sick, but ther boy whut brings ye this letter will show ye whur I live. Come et onct, er et'll be too late.

"A Frien' Uv Ther King."

General Howe read this through, twice, and then looked at the boy with interest.

"Do you know what is in this letter?" he asked.

"Noap," was the reply.

"Do you know who the man is that wrote it?"

The boy shook his head.

"Noap, I dunno who he is," he replied.

"How came you to be his messenger, then?"

"Wal, ye see, et wuz this way," said Sam, fabricating readily. "I wuz passin' erlong ther street, an' I heerd sum-buddy call ter me, an' et wuz this heer man. He gav me ther letter an' tole me ter bring et an' giv' et ter ye, an' I done et. I didn' ax 'im whut his name wuz nor nothin'."

"Humph. How far is it to where this man lives?"

"Not so very fur; ten minnets walk, I guess."

At this moment the door opened and another British officer entered.

General Howe greeted the newcomer delightedly. It was evident that he was glad to have some one to submit the matter to. He extended the letter to the newcomer, and said:

"Read that."

The officer did so.

"Well?" from the general, when the other had finished.

"Where did you get it?"

"The boy brought it," indicating Sam.

"Oh, that's it, eh?"

"Yes. What do you think of it?"

"I think it is worth investigating, general."

"So do I."

"But—it might be a trap, eh?"

General Howe shook his head.

"I hardly think so," he said. Then, turning to the boy, he went on: "Where is this place? Is it in an out-of-the-way place?"



The boy shook his head.

"Noap. Et's right on one uv ther main streets," he replied.

The general nodded his head, and there was satisfaction expressed on his face.

"It could hardly be a trap if he lives on one of the main streets," he said.

"Oh, I judge it is all right," said the other. "Then you you are going?"

"Yes. Will you go along?"

"Perhaps it would be as well. Surely there could be no danger if two of us go."

"I have no fears. Well, come along."

The two officers donned their hats, and accompanied by Sam, left the room and house, and made their way down the street at a good pace.

Ten minutes later he turned aside, at the corner of the house in the cellar of which were the "Liberty Boys," and led the way around to the rear.

The two officers followed unhesitatingly, for they supposed an entrance was to be made by a rear doorway.

When Sam started down the steps of the cellarway, however, they paused and hesitated.

"He isn't down in the cellar, is he?" asked General Howe, in a surprised voice.

"Yep," was the prompt reply.

"But I supposed he was in a house."

"Oh, he's er pore feller, an' kain't afford ter liv' in er real house, I guess," said Sam, carelessly.

"Well, we will go down as far as the cellar-door, but he must come to us there and talk to us. We won't enter."

"Ye'll hev ter go inter ther cellar ef ye wanter tork ter ther fellow," said Sam.

"Why so?"

"'Cause he's sick."

"He is sick?"

"Yep."

"How sick?"

"He's sick abed."

"He is?"

"Yep."

The two British officers looked at each other as well as they could in the darkness, and hesitated.

"What do you think about it, general?" asked the commander-in-chief's companion.

"I hardly know, but think it must be all right. I'm willing to enter the cellar if you are."

"I think it will be safe to do so, general. As the boy

said, we are right here on a main street, and nothing could happen to us."

"All right. Come along. Lead the way, boy."

Sam had waited patiently, and had listened to the conversation with interest, as may be supposed. In fact, Dick and Bob, who were just beyond the doorway leading into the cellar, heard and understood what was said quite plainly, and they were eager and somewhat anxious, as well as the boy, for they feared the officers might refuse to enter the cellar.

Sam led the way down the cellar-way steps with alacrity, and opening the door, passed through, and held the door back so that the officers could enter. Dick and Bob, with every nerve tense, stood just behind the open door, ready to leap upon the two when they should be inside the cellar.

At the farther end of the cellar a candle was burning and Mark's form could be seen stretched out on the rude bunk. As the two officers set foot in the cellar, Mark moved and gave utterance to a hollow groan.

This accomplished the purpose for which it was intended—viz., that of attracting the attention of the redcoats to him, thus giving Dick and Bob the chance they were looking for, and enabling them to make the attack without having been discovered.

As per the program that had been decided upon, Bob struck General Howe's companion a heavy blow with the butt of his pistol, felling the man instantly, while Dick leaped upon the general, and seizing him by the throat, choked him so severely that he was unable to utter a cry for help. Sam closed the cellar-door instantly, and the two officers were neatly trapped.

The officer Bob had knocked down with the pistol-butt was unconscious, and the youth calmly tied his victim's hands and feet, and gagged him, while Mark leaped up and came to Dick's assistance.

Together they soon overpowered General Howe, and tied his hands and gagged him. Then they led him to the desk, and seated him in the chair.

General Howe realized that he had been neatly fooled and trapped, and he was very angry. He glared at the youths in turn, and at the boy, who grinned back at the British commander-in-chief in a manner that was calculated to enrage the officer the more.

Dick stood and looked the officer in the eyes for a few moments in silence, and then he lighted a candle which was stuck in the neck of a bottle standing on the desk, and spread out a sheet of paper before General Howe's eyes.

"Read that," he said, in a stern, threatening voice.



The commander-in-chief of the British army dropped his eyes, and read as follows:

"To the Jailor:—Release the forty patriot prisoners which were placed in your charge the other day. Permit them to depart quietly, in the company of the bearer of this order.

"Signed, \_\_\_\_\_,  
"Commander-in-Chief."

The general read the written words, and then looked up at Dick with a fierce glare in his eyes. He understood, now, that a desperate effort was being made to effect the rescue of the patriot prisoners. More, he recognized Dick Slater, whom he had seen on more than one occasion, and realized that this affair was a serious one.

"I suppose you know me?" remarked Dick quietly. The British officer nodded assent.

"I thought so," quietly. "And knowing me, you know that I am not a man to be trifled with. I am here, as you no doubt understand after reading that, to effect the release of the patriot prisoners, and I am determined to effect their rescue, no matter what happens."

The "Liberty Boy" spoke sternly, grimly, determinedly, and it was plain that his words had considerable effect.

The youth was silent a few moments to give his words time to sink home, and then he lighted another candle and handed it to Bob.

Bob took the candle, and having been instructed regarding the part he was to play, he stepped over to where the keg of powder stood, and took up his position there.

"Do you see that keg of powder?" asked Dick, pointing to it.

General Howe turned his head and looked. He saw the keg, with the head out, and the black powder glistening in the light of the candle held by Bob, and shuddered.

He nodded his head to indicate that he saw it.

"Very well," said Dick. "Now I am going to untie your hands. There is a quill and ink, and you will sign the order which lies before you. Do you understand?"

The officer nodded. He was pale, and there was a frightened look in his eyes.

The youth drew a pistol, and cocked it. "I am going to free your hands, but will not remove the gag," said Dick. "If you attempt to remove the gag before I give you permission to do so I will blow the top of your head off."

With these words Dick untied the officer's hands, and took up his station in front of his victim.

General Howe made a gesture, which Dick interpreted as meaning that he wished to speak.

"All right. I will remove the gag," the youth said. "But if you utter a cry I will put a bullet through you instantly."

He removed the gag, and then said:

"Now, what is it?"

"I wish to warn you, Dick Slater, that if you go on with this affair you will be sorry," said the general, in a tone intended to be impressive.

"Don't waste any words, General Howe," said Dick sternly. "We are desperate, and as determined as we are desperate, and we are going to rescue our comrades from your prison pen. Take up that quill and sign the order."

"Ha! I understand, now," exclaimed the general. "The hundred rebels who were in the old warehouse last night, and whom my men failed to capture were your 'Liberty Boys'!"

"You are right, sir," said Dick. "They were the 'Liberty Boys,' and now that you know who you have to deal with you will do well not to delay longer. Sign the order for the release of the patriot prisoners."

The British officer's face grew red with anger and chagrin.

"I'll be blessed if I do anything of the kind," he said angrily.

"But you have got to sign," said Dick. "Don't cry out!" as the general seemed on the point of making an outcry. "It will be the signal for your death, I assure you. As I have said, we are desperate, and will hesitate at nothing."

"Why, this is the most daring, most impudent piece of work that I have ever had cognizance of in all my life," sputtered the officer.

"That may be, but you may be sure we mean to succeed in our undertaking, daring and impudent though it is."

"You will never make a success of it," angrily. "You will not do it, for I refuse to sign the order."

"Sign the paper," cried Dick, in firm, ringing tones. "Sign, or we will tie you up like your companion and set off the barrel of powder and blow you to fragments."

"You—would—not—dare!" gasped General Howe.

"Sign!" cried Dick imperiously. "Sign or die!"

## CHAPTER X.

### A DARING DEED.

General Howe gazed in the youth's eyes for a few moments, in silence, and then he picked up the quill, dipped it



in the ink, looked again at Dick, and then—signed the order!

There was a look in the eyes of the daring "Liberty Boy" which warned the British officer that he would be taking great risks in refusing to sign, and he loved life too well to risk losing it. So he signed.

"Well done," said Dick. "You are wise, General Howe, and now that you have done what I asked, I will give you my word that no harm shall come to you."

"You will let me and my friend go now?" the officer asked.

"Oh, no," with a smile. "No, I cannot let you go yet. But you shall not stay here any longer than is absolutely necessary. I shall leave word with one who will see to it that you are freed when we have accomplished our work and gotten safely out of the city."

"That is something which I think you will not be able to do," said the general. "I don't think your desperate plan will succeed, even with the aid of this order, for my men will discover what is going on, and capture you."

"I don't think they will do so, general. We will have to risk it, of course."

Then Dick quickly bound the general's hands and feet securely, and gagged him.

Seizing the order for the release of the prisoners, Dick said to his comrades:

"Come, boys, we will get away from here, now, and see what efficacy there is in this document."

The three "Liberty Boys" and little Sam hastened out of the cellar, and paused to fasten the door securely.

"May I go along with you, Dick?" the boy asked.

"Certainly, Sam," was the reply. "I will want you to do something for me after we have freed the prisoners and gotten safely out of the city."

"I know what it is. You want me to let some of the redcoats know where General Howe is, so they kin go an' set him free."

"That is it, exactly."

"But w'y kain't I go erlong uv ye fellers, Dick?"

"Do you wish to do so, Sam?"

"Yep; I'm afeerd thet ef I stay heer in Philadelphia ther redcoats'll git me."

"Ah! I don't know but you would be in danger if you remained."

"Yep. Ye see, Gin'ral Howe'll be shore thet I wuz in with ye fellers, an' ef he wuz ter git holt uv me, I guess et'd be all up with me."

"I guess it would. Well, I am not the fellow to permit

one who has done me a great favor to get into trouble as a result, so you shall go with us, Sam."

"Oh, thank ye, Dick!" cried the boy, his voice vibrating with delight.

"But have you no friends who will wonder what has become of you, and suffer sorrow on your account, my boy?"

"Noap. Nobuddy, Dick," was the reply, in an off-hand, careless tone, yet there was a slight quiver to it that showed the boy had feelings.

"All right. Come along, then, and I will manage to let the redcoats know the whereabouts of their commander-in-chief in some other manner."

The four hastened away, and walked rapidly in the direction of the jail where the patriot prisoners were confined.

As they drew near it they passed several groups of "Liberty Boys," and to each group Dick said as he passed: "All is well; be ready to start at an instant's notice."

He told little Sam to stop with one of the parties, and the boy did so. He understood that the "Liberty Boy" was afraid the jailor might wonder what a ragged boy like him was doing there if he were to go to the jail.

Dick, Bob, and Mark were soon at the jail, and Dick rapped loudly upon the front door.

Presently it was opened, and a man faced them and asked what they wanted.

"I wish to see the jailor," said Dick.

"Why do you wish to see him?"

"I have important business with him."

"You have?"

"Yes. I have here an order from the commander-in-chief relative to the rebel prisoners in his hands. There is need of haste, as the matter is very important."

The three passed through the doorway, the turnkey closed the door, and then the three were conducted to the jailor's private room.

"Well, gentlemen, what can I do for you?" the jailor asked, looking at the strangers curiously.

"This will explain our errand here better than I could do," said Dick, and he held out the order for the release of the prisoners.

The jailor took the sheet of paper, opened it, read the order, and agve utterance to an exclamation of wonder.

"What does this mean?" he cried.

"What is it?" asked the turnkey eagerly.

"It is an order for the release of the rebel prisoners!"

"What? Impossible."

(Continued on page 28.)



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(Continued from page 26.)

"But it is."

The jailor handed the turnkey the order, and said:

"Read for yourself."

The turnkey did so, and then he stared at the paper, at the jailor, and then at the three "Liberty Boys."

"Who are you gentlemen, anyway?" asked the jailor, suspiciously.

"It does not matter," replied Dick, promptly and peremptorily. "That is none of your business. Your duty is to obey orders, and not to ask questions."

"But this order—it is—is remarkable."

"That may be, but it is an order, and direct from your commander-in-chief, and even though it is a remarkable order it is your duty to obey unquestioningly. You cannot be expected to understand everything. There is a reason for the action of General Howe, and he does not have to render an account to you for his actions. Lead the way to where the prisoners are, and set them free."

"Examine this order carefully," said the turnkey, addressing the jailor. "It may be a forgery."

"You are right. Let me have it. I know the commander-in-chief's signature like a book, and if it is a forgery I will be able to detect it."

"I am glad to hear you say that," said Dick calmly, "for the signature is genuine, and you will readily recognize it as such."

"Yes; you are right. It is genuine!" exclaimed the jailor. "Jove, I suppose I shall have to obey the order, strange and unusual though it may be."

"As you value your position here you will do so," said Dick, quietly. "Lead the way to where the prisoners are."

The jailor looked at the order again, then folded it up and placed it in his pocket; then he turned to the three, and beckoned to them.

"Come," he said. "I will show you where the prisoners are, and will set them free."

He led the way, the turnkey and the three "Liberty Boys" following, and presently the turnkey unlocked and opened a door which opened into a large room in which were a number of men.

They were forty in number, and were the patriots who had been captured a few days before. The jailor had brought a candle along, and by its light Dick recognized a number of the men, and fearing some of them would recognize him and unthinkingly speak his name, the youth made a warning gesture, and cried out:

"Follow me, men. You are free to leave the jail. Come along."

Exclamations of delight escaped the men, and they hastened to follow the youths out of the room, along the hall, and out through the front doorway, the turnkey opening the door for them.

"Good-bye," said Dick to the jailor. "Have no fears. This is all right, and as it should be."

"I hope so," was the doubtful reply.

"Oh, it is," was the reply, in a reassuring voice; and then the youths marched away, followed by the liberated prisoners, who did not understand the affair at all, but who were more than willing to accept their freedom, as may well be supposed.

As they passed group after group of the "Liberty Boys," Dick told them to come along, and the entire party of nearly one hundred and fifty walked rapidly till they came to an open lot of perhaps twenty acres extent. In this lot were the "Liberty Boys" horses, ready bridled and saddled.

"Now mount and away, as quickly as possible," cried Dick. "The chances are good that there will be a pack of redcoats at our heels shortly."

"There are not horses enough to go around, Dick," said Bob Estabrook.

"A lot of us will have to ride double. Hurry, for we have no time to lose."

The youths mounted, each and every "Liberty Boy" mounting his own horse, and then those having the largest and strongest horses took the liberated patriots up behind, and as soon as this had been accomplished the start was made.

They attracted a great deal of attention as they dashed along through the suburbs of Philadelphia, but there were not many redcoats to be seen, and they did not attempt to bother the fugitives.

On, on the party dashed, and presently it was out of the city, and heading northward toward Germantown.

The "Liberty Boys" kept a sharp lookout behind them, for pursuers, but neither saw nor heard anything of the redcoats.

It really looked as if they were to escape. It looked as if the daring of the "Liberty Boys" was to be crowned with success, and that the rescue of the prisoners was an assured fact.

\* \* \* \* \*

The jailor and turnkey of the jail were badly flurried. The more they thought of the matter of the releasing of the prisoners, the more they thought there must be some mistake about it—something wrong.



"I'll hasten to headquarters and see what the commander-in-chief has to say about it," the jailor said, and he hurried away.

When he reached headquarters, General Howe was not in his room, nor did anyone know where he was.

There were some officers there, however, and when the jailor told what had occurred, and showed the written order, the officer at once jumped to the conclusion that something was wrong, and very much wrong at that.

"This is a rebel trick," one cried, "and a most daring and desperate trick at that."

"And it seems to have succeeded, too," from another.

Instantly the alarm was sent out. It was feared that the commander-in-chief and the officer who had left headquarters in his company had been murdered, and searching parties were soon at work throughout the city.

The result was that, after an hour had passed the general and his companion in suffering were found in the old cellar, trussed up like turkeys.

They were speedily released of their bonds, and when General Howe was informed of the fact that the patriot prisoners had been set free he raved and almost tore his hair.

"Oh, but I would like to get my hands on that young scoundrel, Dick Slater," he would exclaim every few minutes, shaking his clenched fist in the air. "I would make him wish he had never been born."

The general was of a volatile temperament, however, and after a while his anger cooled down, and he took a seat at the table and fell to drinking and smoking, and finally to playing cards, and the officers made a night of it, and drowned their anger and discomfiture in drink and play.

The "Liberty Boys" and their rescued comrades arrived at Valley Forge about two o'clock, and went quietly to their quarters, nothing being known of their coming till next morning, and then, when it became known that the youths had actually entered Philadelphia and rescued the forty patriots from the jail in the heart of the city, there was universal rejoicing, and praises of the youths and their wonderful daring was heard on every side.

Of course, Dick went to headquarters to report, immediately after breakfast.

"What is this I hear, Dick?" the commander-in-chief cried, leaping up and giving the youth his hand. "Did you indeed succeed in rescuing the prisoners, as is reported?"

"Yes, your excellency, we succeeded."

"And were none of your men killed?"

"Not a shot was fired, sir."

"Well, well. I don't understand it. Tell me all about it, Dick."

"Very well, sir, I will do so."

And he did. He told the whole story, and the commander-in-chief listened with absorbed interest, his eyes sparkling.

"My boy," he said, when the youth had finished. "I believe I can truthfully say that this feat which you and your 'Liberty Boys' have successfully performed is without any exception the most wonderful, the most daring of any that I have ever heard of in the course of the war."

"Well, it was daring, true, sir," said Dick; "but that was the only kind of plan that was likely to succeed."

"You are right. Well, I congratulate you, Dick, on your success, and will say that I appreciate it to the fullest extent."

"I am happy in having done my duty, your excellency."

"You have done what no one else could have done, I am confident."

"After some further conversation, Dick took his departure, the commander-in-chief again shaking his hand and complimenting him.

"And tell your brave 'Liberty Boys' that I give each and every one of them full credit for what they did in this daring affair, Dick," he added.

"I will do so, your excellency," said Dick. "They will be greatly pleased."

And they were. When Dick told them what the commander-in-chief had said they gave utterance to cries of delight, and wound up by giving three cheers for General Washington.

This daring feat—the rescue of the patriot prisoners from the hands of the British—made the "Liberty Boys" the heroes of the patriot army, and went far toward establishing their reputation for not being afraid of anything.

#### THE END.

The next number (97) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' LONG MARCH; OR, THE MOVE THAT PUZZLED THE BRITISH," by Harry Moore.

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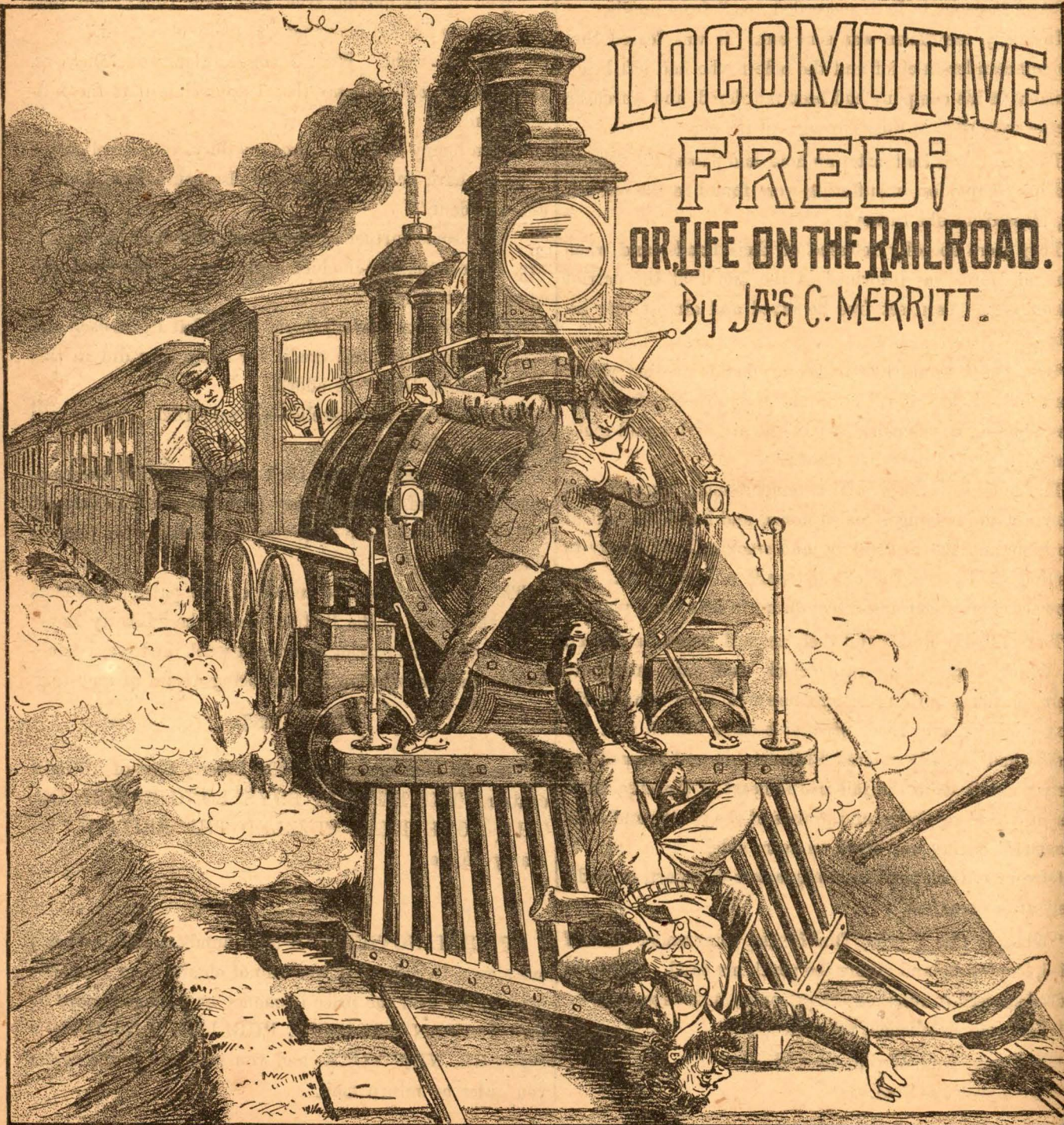
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